

Frogs, turtles, snakes and other herps are in trouble

Head and shoulders
Photo of DC or
Soil Conservationist
here

By _____,
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_____ County.

Before you say you're not disappointed that frogs, turtles, snakes and other "herps" are in trouble, read on.

They may be among the most misunderstood of species; most are not nearly as dangerous as people fear them to be. In fact, they are beneficial in the chain of life, eating insects, rodents and other pests. But they are in decline in the United States and worldwide, largely because of the loss or degradation of habitat. Amphibians have been dubbed the aquatic "canary of the coal mine" because they reveal subtle declines in environmental health. There are specific habitat needs of different species of amphibians and reptiles, and you could help those species with specific habitats. But generally, you can help herp habitat by improving habitat for wildlife in general. Steps that help most wildlife species, including herps, are:

- 1) Keep or establish natural vegetation along ponds, streams, wetlands, crop fields and wherever else possible to protect the land and provide food and cover for wildlife.
- 2) Large habitat areas are more valuable to herps than a series of small areas. Try to keep from "fragmenting" large areas.
- 3) Establish well-vegetated corridors to connect patches of habitat, so herps can travel

from one to another with protection. Many female turtles, for instance, return to their maternal nesting site to lay eggs-- both the nesting site and travel lanes to the site are critical to turtles.

- 4) Protect and restore wetlands, including seasonal wetlands, some of the most important habitat to amphibians.
- 5) Establish native vegetation in buffer zones around wetlands.
- 6) Leave logs, snags, and other woody debris.
- 7) Leave protective vegetation 50-75 feet wide along streams, to guard against streambank erosion and to provide cover for many herps.
- 8) Keep cattle out of streams.
- 9) Don't clear-cut forests, and manage forestland for a diversity of plant habitat with understory.
- 10) Use selective spot spraying or wick application if herbicides are applied near waterways. Avoid them if you can.

Get more info. For more information, stop at our office at (Number) (Street) in (city) , or visit the NRCS Wildlife Habitat Management Institute's website at www.whmi.nrcs.usda.gov or the NRCS home web site at www.nrcs.usda.gov



Most lizards are helpful, eating pest insects. Few are dangerous; they are among the many amphibians and reptiles that need help in habitat conservation or development.

Wildlife Ways Did you know....



Snakes can go for months without eating. Many turtles live for more than 50 years. And, some frogs can survive being frozen for long periods of time. The world of herptiles-- amphibians and reptiles-- is a fascinating one.